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ABSTRACT

To examine how the contents of Korean television serial dramas have changed and to determine trends of their portrayals of male and female characters' lifestyles, a study analyzed Korean television dramas of 1977 and 1987. A sample of three channels' video--22 daily and 14 weekly episodes of 18 different television dramas during weekday prime time (7 p.m. to 10 p.m.) In September 1977 and September 1987--was used for the study. Analysis revealed that the setting for most dramas of both years was Korea. Dramas dealing with psychological problems in 1977 usually depicted people who were dedicated to some clear purpose in life with positive attitudes. However, in 1987 most dramas portrayed characters who were skeptical about their current and future lives. Regarding the fictional characters on these dramas, the following differences were noted: (1) the number of characters per drama increased; (2) the number of supporting roles decreased, while the number of major roles increased; and (3) male characters were increasingly important in 1987 dramas. In 1987, both male and female characters were more often classified as active and independent than in 1977, and female characters were even more active and independent than male characters. In 1987, the dramas examined current problems, such as the loss of community ties and the break-up of the family, while in 1977 dramas reflected a nostalgia for the warm community ties that had been lost in the process of economic growth. (Six figures and five tables of data are included.) (MM)

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Comparative Analysis of Korean Television Dramas Between 1977 and 1987: Changes of Themes and Lifestyles of Characters

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Comparative analysis of Korean television dramas between 1977 and 1987: Changes of themes and lifestyles of characters

Korean television serial dramas are a unique form of entertainment, a form of popular culture, different from American prime-time serials in production techniques. By focusing on family and interpersonal relationships, like American soaps, the serials are more realistic than radio serials and American prime-time soaps. Just as the problems of real life have changed over 25 years, so have the fictional presentations of the real world on both American daytime soaps and Korean prime-time serials. The present study examines Korean dramas of both 1977 and 1987 to find out how contents have been changed over the period and determine trends of their portrayals of male and female characters' lifestyles. The most obvious change in Korean dramas has been in the area of traditional values on sex, money, social issues, and family.

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Since the days when the first Korean television drama "The Season of Desire" typified the Korean family in 1963, television has come a long way in its portrayal of Korean society. In its quest to both capture and retain a large viewing public, and advertisers, producers of television dramas have modified their wares to reflect changing cultural attitude and concerns. The range of dramatic materials on television has very serious consequences for the Korean psyche. Nonetheless various kinds of social problems, which had been restricted in the name of mental health of the public, have emerged on the television screen.

In any society, the messages disseminated by television are of primary importance because television drama offers to the viewer a stream of facts and impressions about the constancies and vagaries of human nature, and about the consequences of actions (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 178). Thus television provides many of the same socialization processes as the family: it provides examples of good and bad behavior and varies the frequency, consistency and power of these examples. For example, the transmission of the sex role is a crucial element in the socialization process, for such teaching provides essential guidelines for sex-appropriate appearances in western and traditional style, interests, skills, behavior and self-perceptions. In Korea, more stringent than mere "guides", sex role stereotypes have traditionally suggested that people not conforming to these specifications are inadequate. If television has become a profound socializing influence in

society, its definitions of sex role and the price of non-conformity cannot be ignored.

An analysis of the socialization processes created by television dramas - a major genre in Korean television, with a huge audience - can provide important clues to understand Korean society and culture as a whole. Not only are dramas part of this culture themselves, but also they reflect (with varying degree of accuracy) a wide range of social realities. For me, television dramas in Korea are a form of folk literature representing idealized human characters, emotions, and actions. This paper analyzes and compares evening-broadcast contemporary television dramas of both 1977 and 1987 in Korea. With approaches of both psychology and anthropology, it is the purpose of this study to: (1) Find out how the main subjects and themes of Korean television dramas have been changed during the period, (2) identify various factors affecting those changes, and (3) determine trends of their portrayals of male and female characters' lifestyles.

Brief History and Current Status of Korean Television System

Experimental television casting in Korea began in 1956 with the opening of a commercial TV station in Seoul. In December 1961, the Korea Broadcasting System (KBS) was set up by the government in Seoul as the first full-scale television service in the country (World Television and Radio Stations, 1988, p. 23-24). Three years later, Sam-Sung Group, the largest

conglomerate in Korea, launched private Tong-Yang Broadcasting Corporation (TBC) as a part of Tong-Yang Media Group. The second commercial television service, Mun-Wha Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), was also inaugurated in December 1969. KBS-TV, the largest TV network in Korea, now has its key station in Seoul and 21 local stations under its management (Ibid). On the other hand, MBC-TV, adopting the American network system, has no control over its affiliates, which are owned and operated by local entrepreneurs.

In addition, the American Forces Korean Network (AFKN) is operated by the U. S. Armed Forces to serve forty-thousand or so military personnel as well as American civilians in Korea. Despite growing anti-American attitudes, more and more Korean people are viewing AFKN-TV to satisfy their curiosity over American culture, to learn the international language, English, to get more accurate news about their own country, and to fill up their viewing times when Korean channels are not operated (9:30 Am to 5:00 Pm on weekdays).

After the assassination of President Park in 1979, TBC, the most profitable station, was taken over and named as KBS-2 by the new military government. The government also absorbed a 60% share of MBC. Currently, there are four channels of two television networks in Korea - **KBS- 1**(Korea Broadcasting System, government owned and controlled), **KBS-2** (formerly Tong-Yang Broadcasting Corporation), **KBS-3** (broadcasts only educational programs-languages, gardening, cooking, etc.), and **MBC** (Mun-Wha

Broadcasting Corporation, 60% of its shares owned by government). Virtually no single private television station exists in Korea, although launching a new commercial television broadcasting station is expected after the Seoul Olympics (Telephone interview with Chong-Ho Park, the former TBC drama producer, free-lancer of NBC Seoul Olympic preparation team, June 29, 1988).

Korean Prime-Time Serials versus American Soap Operas

Like American soaps, Korean TV serial dramas came from radio dramas. There are, however, two major differences between American soaps and Korean serial dramas. First, Korean serials consist of a finite number of episodes which tell a story from beginning to end. None of the Korean serials has lasted for even two years (Ibid). They are between soap operas and mini-series' in length. Secondly, Korean drama is the dominant format in prime-time television (average 45% in prime-time). Korean dramas differ, however, from American prime-time soaps like Dynasty, Dallas, and Falcon Crest in the manner of production techniques. Those American prime-time soaps represent a marriage between the film industry and broadcasting, being filmed rather than taped. They also differ in contents. The content of American prime-time drama is hardly a reflection of the tastes and ideology of its creators. It represents a struggle between those who value the sensational content for commercial purposes and those who value the content for social, cultural, and aesthetic reasons. On the other hand, Korean

prime-time drama and American day-time soap require a low investment to produce them. Thus, both can afford, especially the Korean drama with a huge audience, the luxury of building an audience, whereas American prime-time series cannot.

With American day-time soaps and Korean night-time series, my observations of a number of episodes indicated, for these two formats, the relationship between narrative structure and production techniques is quite similar. Korean prime-time serials, however, do not attract just advertisers of soap products. They are the show cases of all products ranging from beers to diapers. Therefore, the competition among stations to grasp audiences' attention is more than a war. If the stations decide to pull off a drama from the air because of low rating, or direct negative feedback from audiences and pressure groups, the writer has to end the story immediately. For example, they often express their discontents on dramas by calling stations or campaigning not to watch those dramas. Thus, the contents of dramas are largely controlled by the audience. Since almost all dramas are serials, the last episodes of "early-withdrawns" often produce dozens of awkward conclusions.

Trends in Korean TV Programs

It is important to point out some general trends in Korean contemporary television dramas from 1977 to 1987. First, although the average viewing

time has risen from 4.5 hours to 6 hours, the overall ratings of dramas have dropped significantly (over 25 is considered as high-rating, KBS Annual Report, 1987, p. 7). This study found that there were more dramas (11 different dramas in one week of three stations) in 1977 than in 1987 (7 dramas). This trend reflects the growing popularity of live broadcasts of amateur and professional sports , as well as variety shows and "60 Minutes" type news magazine programs. Other reasons for the decline of dramas are the lack of ideas and fear of government restraints on drama content. Although the authority does not require the formal approval of drama contents, writers and production staffs are usually cautious about stories which may deal with delicate social and political issues.

The prime public enemy in Korean dramas has been rich people who earn fortunes through a failed economic distribution system. Underprivileged people led by a determined main character always fight the rich people and win nothing but moral victory over the money. When the fight is over, the poors often blame their own destinies. In reality, however, people know that the rich people and their destinies are not all to be blamed. They recognize what is the fundamental problem in the economic gap between the rich and the poor. Here, dramas create false reality regarding the fortune. That is, the fortune is not achieved through hard-working but lucks and destiny. No single society functions in perfect conditions. Every society suffers with variety of problems; those problems should be identified

and discussed through careful diagnosis rather than covering them up. In the near future, I suspect Koreans will realize that those problems are not the products of destiny and bad luck. Therefore, the change of drama content will be inevitable.

During the political turmoil in 1979 through 1981, the new military government, led by former president Doo-Whan Chun, tried to develop positive images of the regime by calling people's attention to the contest with Japan over the 1988 Summer Olympic ticket. The IOC (International Olympic Committee) decision was a major political victory for the new regime. Koreans began to believe one thing: that the Olympics signalled their nation's emergence from economic puberty, just as the 1964 Tokyo Olympics marked Japan's transformation into a modern industrial power. At the same time, the government began to realize the importance of public perceptions of its image portrayed by media, especially television. Former president Chun's successor, Tae-Woo Roh, has cautiously sought to distance himself from the unpopular Chun regime. In doing so, Roh has tried to appear as many times as possible on national media to be portrayed as supportive of a new frontier of Korean democracy. Although Koreans are not certain whether Roh will take a democratic or authoritarian path, he has been surprisingly free to discuss ugly incidents of the past through media. Obviously, the government has been self-conscious about its image. On the Korean boxing officials' assaulting of New Zealian referee over a controversial

decision in the Seoul Olympics, the government officially expressed its discontent over NBC's extensive and repeated reports (2 hours and 23 minutes) about the incident (Korean Herald, Sep 30, 1988). This kind of complaint regarding the national image on foreign media had never been made by the government before. Former president Chung-Hee Park, who ran the country from his coup in 1961 to his assassination in 1979, tried to suppress news media and seemed to underestimate the power of image on television medium.

Since the decision in 1981 to hold the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, there has been major reform in TV programs: (1) "Saturday Night Live" type comedy programs for youth have substantially increased; (2) live broadcasts of both amateur and professional sports have been in prime-time for at least two days in a week; (3) live concerts and variety shows have dominated prime-times on weekends; (4) many huge budget mini-series (consisting of three to four episodes) describing economic prosperity, patriotism, and historical heroes have been produced; (5) game shows have been increased; (6) some news magazine programs have fascinated audiences by investigating and analyzing social problems resulting from industrialization; however, those programs never dealt with domestic political problems. Although the number of American TV programs has not increased, KBS, KBS-2, and MBC pulled off old TV series, such as "Combat," "Mission Impossible," "Six Million Dollar Man," "I love Lucy," and so on. Instead, those three channels are

broadcasting relatively new programs, such as "The A-Team," "Macgyver," "Air Wolf," "Silver Spoons," "Dallas," and similar shows. Foreign programs, however, have never been in prime-times of Korean TV. It is obvious that the government, especially the Ministry of Culture and Information, has tried to maintain its power over the public by emphasizing patriotism, nationalism, and heroism rather than justice and freedom of speech in television contents. The government also has been relatively successful to divert the general public's political interests away from corruption in the Chun regime by increasing various kinds of entertainment programs and live sports broadcasting.

Despite the decreasing number of dramas, producers of three channels have kept improving dramas' formats as well as contents. The major change in drama format emerged in 1977, with the great success of the first drama series broadcast in one-hour time slots each week. All the stations rushed to produce more one-hour series (Telephone interview with Chong-Ho Park). Few dramas maintain the old format (25 minutes per episode, 5 times a week), while most are transformed into the one-hour format (2 times a week). The main themes in dramas of 1987 came to be the crisis in community relations and the crisis in the family. In 1977, many dramas centered on a particularly dedicated and humanistic main character who was able to solve any problem. The conclusions of most dramas were easily imaginable: happy endings. While many supporting characters appeared to

be lacking in morality, dignity, and self-discipline, the main character was described as a hard-driving perfectionist with less emotion.

On the other hand, it is difficult to identify a single main character or his or her personality in the dramas of 1987. Often two or three main characters lead story lines by cooperating or fighting over main affairs. Thus, it is not only difficult to follow the story line, but it makes the drama more exciting. I think that this trend reflects the complexity of Korean society that has resulted from the radical modification of traditional values by economic growth. In dealing with the crisis in the family, many dramas focused on adultery. If adultery is committed by the male, it is easily forgiven; however, Korean society does not tolerate adultery committed by the female. There is an old saying that a man must do three things well to be a hero - take alcohol, control money, and not stay with one woman. This die-hard evil is still widely accepted by Korean society.

Method

In the communication process a central position is occupied by the content of the message. Content is defined as that body of meanings that make up the communication itself (Berelson, 1952; Krippendorf, 1982). For the purpose of this study, then, since the aim is to investigate the exact content of Korean television dramas, content analysis is used. Content analysis is defined as a "research technique that allows for the objective,

systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (1952, p. 18). And, "manifest content" is accepted to mean what is (or was) said or printed, not what is implied between the lines (Blake & Haroldsen, 1975).

A sample of three channels' (KBS 1, KBS 2, and MBC) video recorded 22 daily and 14 weekly episodes of 18 different television dramas during prime-time (7 pm-10 pm) in September of 1977 and 1987 was used (See table 1). A week of September was selected because the level of excitement in drama content, as well as rating, is much higher in autumn than any other seasons. The sample under study consisted of Monday through Friday programing (September 5th - 9th of 1977; September 7th - 11th of 1987). Saturdays and Sundays were excluded from the study because the stations use different formats on the weekend. Detective dramas and situation comedies were also excluded because of their one story per episode format. This yielded a sample of twenty-three hours and ten minutes (10 4/6 hours in 1977; 12 5/6 hours in 1987) of television dramas. All dramas for this study were drawn according to daily television schedules of "Seoul Sinmoon" (newspaper). Finally, all dramas of 1977 and 1987 were rented from Korean grocery stores both in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Columbus, Ohio.

Table 1

Television Dramas of 1977 and 1987

September of 1977			September of 1987		
KBS	TBC	MBC	KBS 1	KBS 2	MBC
Love and Hatred	Blue Room and Red Room	Why Is It?	We'll Find Your Love	A Stranger	Love and Ambition
Flower Wind	Deutero-gamy	You	Young Sunflower	Gate of Desire	Big Sister-in-Law
Testimony	Seoul's Night Song	A Couple			Urban Faces
	Wind and Cold Rain	** Shades are One-hour dramas The rest are 25 minutes format ** Titles are directly translated without considering connotations of titles			
	Only Daughter				

A multi-viewing procedure was used to analyze both psychological and anthropological aspects of the dramas. The first viewing involved the review of the 1977 dramas to identify basic characteristics of drama contents (locale, main settings, themes). Locale and main settings were recorded as they were perceived. Regarding themes, I designed a classification system which consisted of four major categories: 1) Lifestyles, with 4 subcategories; 2) Male-female relations, with 2 subcategories; 3) Social interactions, with 4 subcategories; 4) Social problems, with 4 subcategories. Each program was

then coded regarding the programs and the themes according to the categories listed above.

The second viewing involved the review of characters of 18 dramas in terms of their demographic attributes and lifestyle membership. Demographic data relating to sex, age, marital status, and occupation were recorded. In addition, the characters' lifestyle tendencies were recorded in terms of their interests, motivations, and personal values. The data for each drama were then analyzed and sorted into the appropriate lifestyle categories.

Results

Changes in Basic Characteristics of Drama Content

LOCALE - Most dramas of both 1977 and 1987 take place in Korea. Except for excursions to foreign countries, the serial dramas tend to have domestic settings, familiar to most viewers. In 1977, even though some dramas frequently showed farms, fishing villages, and other places outside of Seoul as sub-locales, all eleven dramas mainly took place in the old-fashioned "Toshim," or downtown (8 dramas) and new luxury apartments in modern districts of Seoul (3 dramas). This particular trend could be interpreted as a reflection of the living condition shift from the traditional house structure with coal-heating system to a contemporary apartment with oil-heating system which became an ultimate dream of Korean yuppies. In

Table 2

Basic Characteristics of Contemporary Dramas

Figures indicate number of programs where figures indicate cases of appearance except locale. .Repeated appearances of locale counted as one appearance.

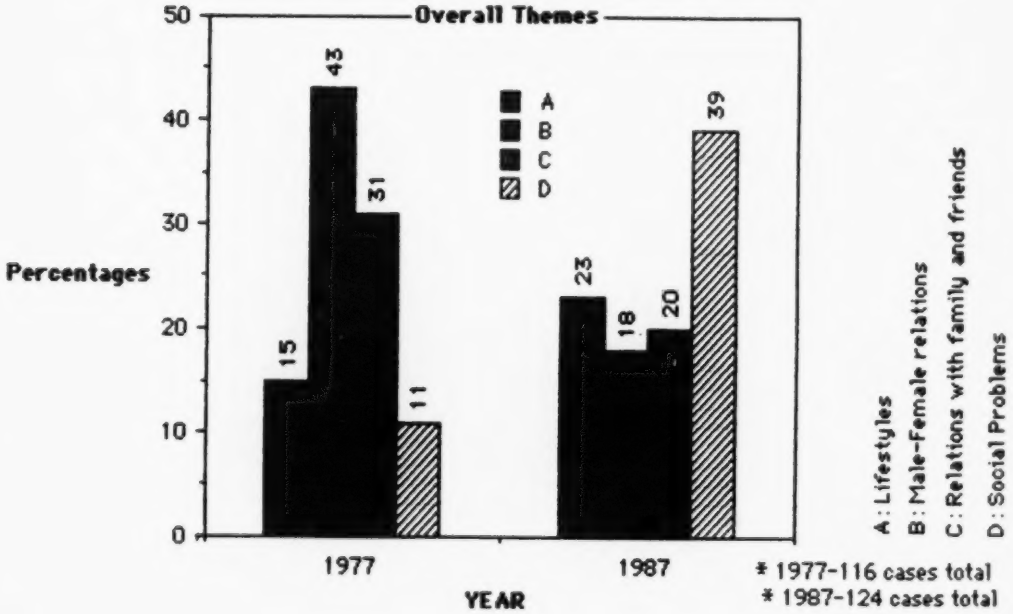
	CATEGORIES	1977	1987
Locale	Old-fashioned neighborhoods(Seoul)	12	5
	Modern Districts(Seoul)	12	14
	Suburbs(Seoul)	3	10
	Other cities	4	9
	Farming or Fishing Villages	12	3
	Overseas	0	1
Main Setting	Traditional house	41	24
	Work places	15	29
	Hospital	3	8
	School	7	5
	Police-Station, Court	5	9
	Bar, Restaurant, Coffee shop	6	11
	Hotel, Inn	4	9
	Vehicles	5	8
	Outdoors	3	5
	Apartments	4	12
	Others	4	5
Tones of dramas	Serious	5	2
	Light (Not sit-coms)	2	1
	Mixed	4	4
Total number of dramas		11	7

1987, the number of dramas which were set only in the downtown had dropped to one. Since all dramas of 1987 had two or more main characters, there was no single dominant locale. For example, in the highest rated show of 1987 MBC's "Love and Ambition," three major locales accommodated three main characters (a mother and two irreconcilable brothers). The old-fashioned neighborhoods have been characterized by warm, long-term community ties, while people in the new housing developments of the suburbs try to keep their distance from their neighbors for privacy. This phenomenon is deeply related with currently growing individualism and core family structure in Korean society. In addition, the number of dramas set in farming and fishing villages fell from twelve to three, probably due to the rapid growth of population and the rise of new industry in the 1970s which created economic opportunities outside the rural village, and absorbed the agricultural surplus population (Chang, 1977, p. 50). Thus, fewer interests were given to rural areas.

MAIN SETTINGS - Basically, main settings have not significantly changed over the period, although more dramas represented cafes, police stations, slums, luxury condominiums, and hotels in 1987, while more are set in schools, parks where young couples date, and offices in 1977. Many dramas in 1977 dealt with problems emerging, for example, in a close-knit community, centered around a small marketplace; and such problems were then solved on the private level, through warm relations among members of

Figure 1

Changes in Themes of Contemporary Dramas



the community. Few dramas in 1987, however, portrayed such community ties. Instead, they focused on problems which involve the society as a whole, and which can be solved only by social authorities or community efforts. Along with the tendency to portray such broad social problems, images of TV dramas became more serious. Clearly, there is a growing tendency to focus on both social problems and individual psychological problems in 1987. Fewer dramas dealt with male-female relations or ties among family members and friends. With the declining emphasis on the local community, the individual is shown in direct contact with impersonal social forces.

THEMES - Dramas dealing with psychological problems in 1977 usually depicted people who were dedicated to some clear purpose in life with positive attitudes. This traditional view of values and of the world, however, has been changed over the decade. Most dramas in 1987 portrayed characters who were skeptical about their current and future lives. Particularly, female characters were confused between their traditional roles as housewives and new roles as career women. This theme shows how Korean women today suffer from being unable to find a lifestyle to which they can commit themselves. This phenomenon is closely related to the automation of housework, which provides extra time and a latitude of mind,

Figure 1a

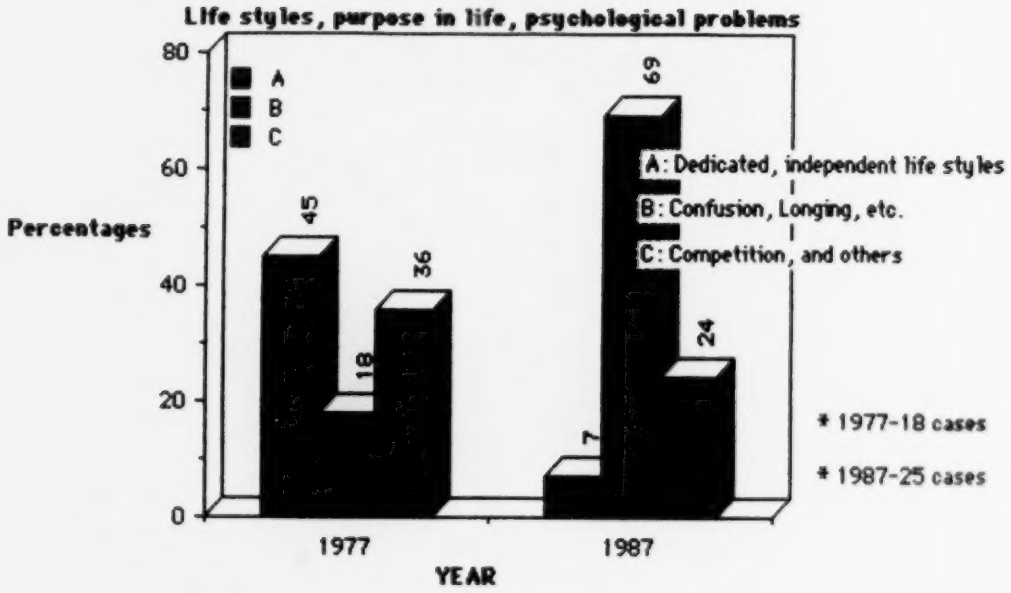
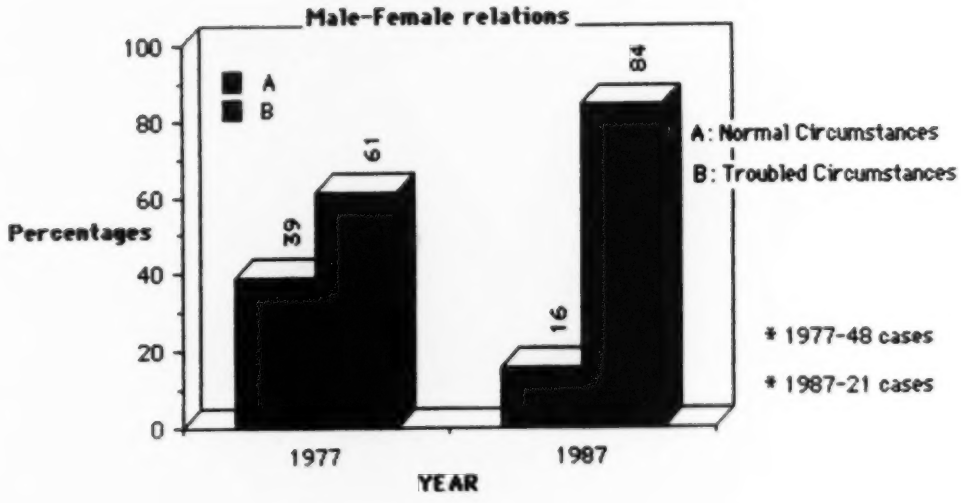

Life styles, purpose in life, psychological problems
80
60
40
20
0
Percentages
A
B
C
45
18
36
7
69
24
1977
1987
YEAR
A: Dedicated, independent life styles
B: Confusion, Longing, etc.
C: Competition, and others
* 1977-18 cases
* 1987-25 cases

Figure 1b


Male-Female relations
100
80
60
40
20
0
Percentages
A
B
39
61
16
84
1977
1987
YEAR
A: Normal Circumstances
B: Troubled Circumstances
* 1977-48 cases
* 1987-21 cases

and current feminist movements which stress the equality of the human being.

Although most dramas of both 1977 and 1987 depicted male-female love affairs, nostalgic love affairs were less emphasized in 1987 dramas. Figure 1-1d shows the decrease of traditional themes such as normal married life, loneliness, love triangles, rivalry, jealousy and self-sacrifice for the other. Dramas of 1987 focused on more somber themes such as marital crises, adultery, and divorces which were complicated by interweaving with other non-love affairs. In place of emphasizing the beauty and pathos of love, dramas have come to focus on the unconventional aspects of male-female relations. For example, "Deuterogamy" of 1977 was the story about a widow who fell in love with a man and married him in the final episode. The whole story of fifty episodes was only about how she met the man and got married, and could easily be handled by an American two-hour TV movie. On the other hand, the long serious process of those affairs was casualized and complicated with other external problems in 1987 dramas. This trend is one outcome of modernization and materialism, although other variables need to be examined to explain the trend.

The dramas in 1977 and 1987 show a reversal in the percentage of those showing family love and those portraying family conflicts, especially between parents and children. Furthermore, the growing tendency to portray the collapse of marital relations also leads to the portrayal of its

Figure 1c

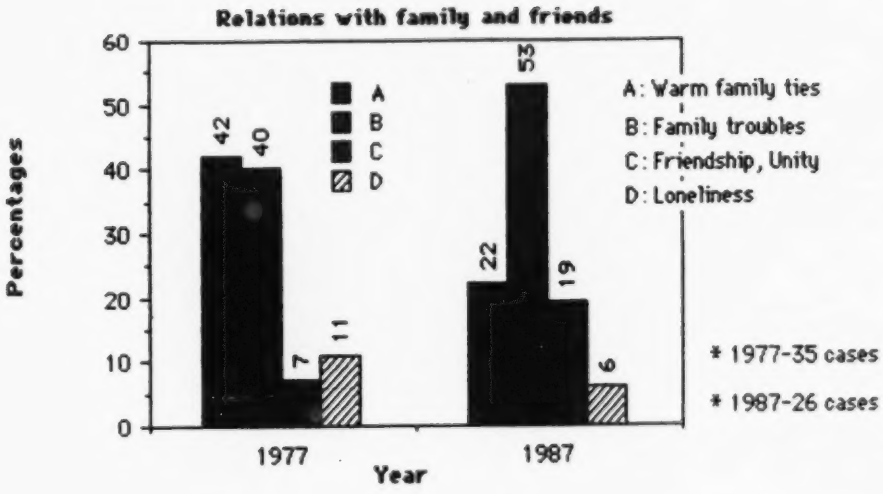
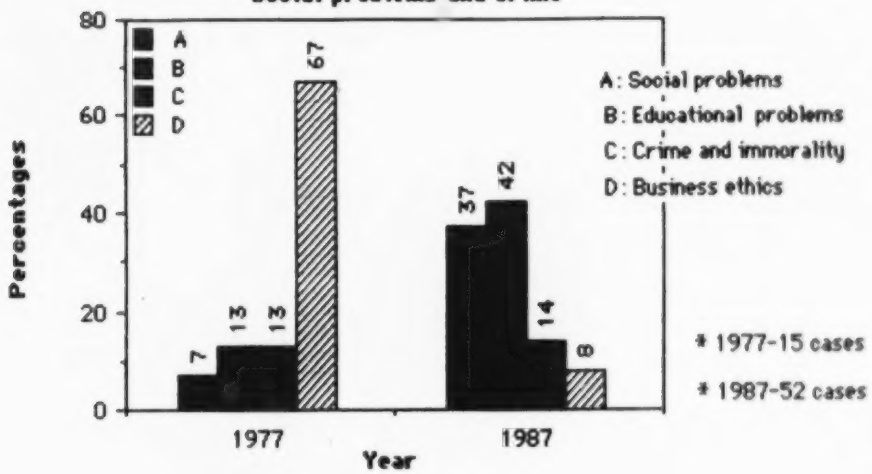

Relations with family and friends
Percentages
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
42
40
7
11
22
53
19
6
A
B
C
D
1977
1987
Year
A: Warm family ties
B: Family troubles
C: Friendship, Unity
D: Loneliness
* 1977-35 cases
* 1987-26 cases

Figure 1d

Social problems and crime



effect on the children involved. As mentioned above, more individuals are shown in direct contact with impersonal social forces, not only because of the declining emphasis on community ties but also because of this crumbling of family ties. To be specific, many dramas have come to focus on non-family ties among children, among women, or among old people.

Even though a certain degree of exaggeration and distortion influenced those dramas, the portrayals of social changes in TV dramas' themes still tell us how the harmony of the traditional culture and the Western culture in the 1970s has been changed into the confusion of the 1980s. Korea is no exception to the phenomenon of multipolarity which developing societies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America are experiencing under rapid socio-cultural changes. The negative impact of modernization and industrialization on the Korean traditional family system is the most serious outcome of all. The family is the starting point of anything in society. If the family does not function properly, the whole society may not function as it should.

The family system of Korea is the greatest legacy of traditional culture of bygone days, and is the keeper which has sustained it. Many people insist that this family system of Korea, which respects older people and cares for younger people, has to be handed down and preserved as an asset even in the welfare-oriented future. Nevertheless, Korean society encounters its greatest crisis in today's modernization of industrialization and urbanization in that very family system. Family members are dispersed and the home

and the family clan are disintegrating. More than anything else, the benevolent traits in the warm human relations among Korean families are being pushed away by materialism and egoism in the industrialized and urbanized cities. While the rapid changes of the traditional family system are taking place, the question is raised whether the public perception of sex roles has been changed in the society. The study turns to an analysis of the male and female characters in contemporary dramas, to see how the portrayal of sex roles changed between 1977 and 1987.

Changes in Characteristics of Korean Dramas' Fictional Population

A doctoral dissertation by Hae-Ok Lee (1981), "An Analysis Study into the Sex-Role Division as Reflected in Korean TV Soap Operas," claims that exaggerations and distortions similar to those in American soap operas also take place in Korea. According to Lee, women appear in far smaller numbers than men and their roles are unimportant compared to those of men. The occupations of women are portrayed as having less authority and so do not constitute an important factor in the story development. Women are characterized by TV as romantic, passive and persevering, while men are realistic, active and independent (Cited in Yoon, 1982, 37-38).

According to the present study, however, most of these images are untrue. First, there are more differences than similarities between American day-time soap operas and Korean prime-time dramas. More systematic

study in this area is desirable rather than a simple presumption. Second, even though the occupations of women are portrayed as having less authority in most dramas, over 90 percent of female characters in the present study play major roles in the story development. Third, dramas in both 1977 and 1987 portray main female characters as strong, modern, independent, active, and spirited. Such characters outnumbered characters with traditional female virtues of gentleness, passive, and humility. Different samples with different analytical techniques in both studies might bear contradictory results. However, since women make up the majority of their audience, contemporary dramas tend to portray female characters with the appeal of strong modern women. Given this situation, were general portrayals of female characters in Korean TV dramas exaggerated in a positive way? The answer probably requires other explanations of Korean society as a whole.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS - Figures 2a-c classify all characters appearing in the programs analyzed. Females slightly outnumber males in the major and supporting roles in 1977. In 1987, however, the number of male characters' appearances was about same with that of female characters. The following differences are apparent between 1977 and 1987; (1) the number of characters per drama-especially the number of minor characters (extras)-increased; (2) the number of supporting roles was decreased, while the number of major roles was increased (dramas of 1987 tended to portray

Figure 2a **Major Female and Male Characters (1977)**

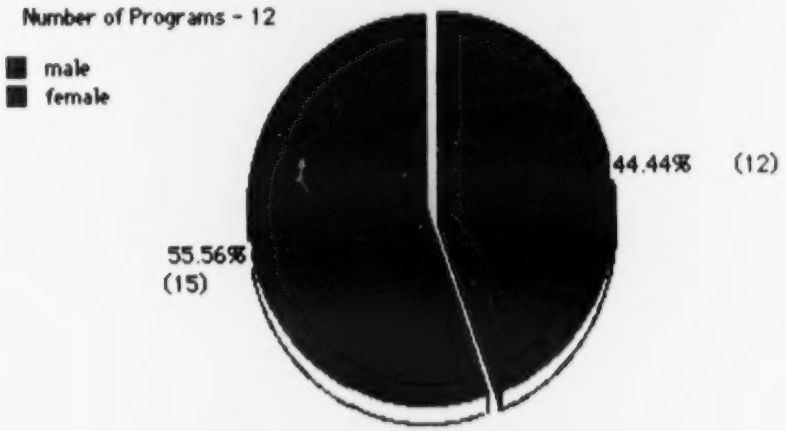
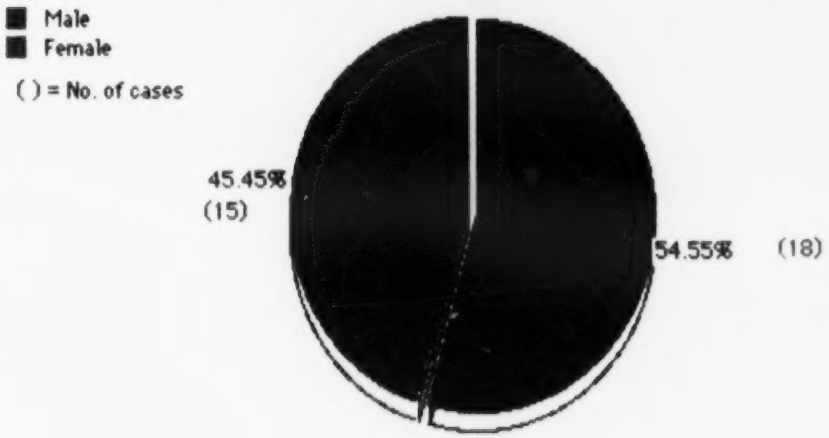


Figure 2b

Major Female and Male Characters (1987)



several characters rather than just one); and (3) male characters were increasingly important in 1987 dramas. These changes are probably related to the fact that a growing number of dramas came to deal with broader social concerns, as described in the previous section.

The identifications of ages were possible because almost all characters mentioned their ages in dramas. Figure 3a-b show the age levels of male and female characters in contemporary dramas. In both 1977 and 1987, more than 50 percent of the female characters were in their 20's or younger, while the majority of male characters were in their 30's or more. Obviously, there was a certain degree of bias toward youth in female characters. However, the percentage of both male and female characters in their 20's declined in the 1987 dramas, while the percentage of characters in either their teens or their 30's increased. This trend was particularly marked in the case of female characters; although females in their 20's remained the highest percentage rate, they accounted for 43 percent in 1977, but only 23 percent in 1987, with a fairly balanced percentage of other female characters in their teens and 30's. The percentage of male characters in their 20's dropped by over half, from 29 percent to 14 percent. The highest percentage of the male characters in 1987 were in their 30's (30%). These changes can be supposed to reflect the actual population structure. In 1977, the post-Korean war baby-boom generation were still in their 20's. But by 1987, they had reached their 30's and many had children growing into their

Figure 2c

Supporting Female and Male Characters

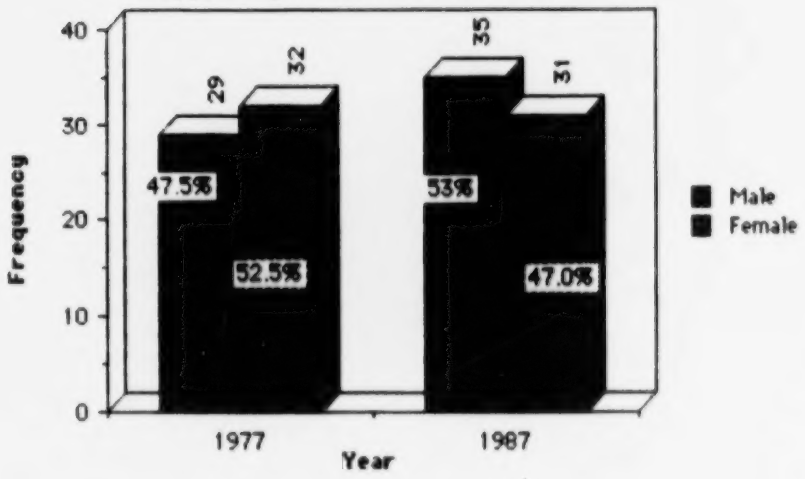


Figure 3a

Ages of all male and female characters (1977)

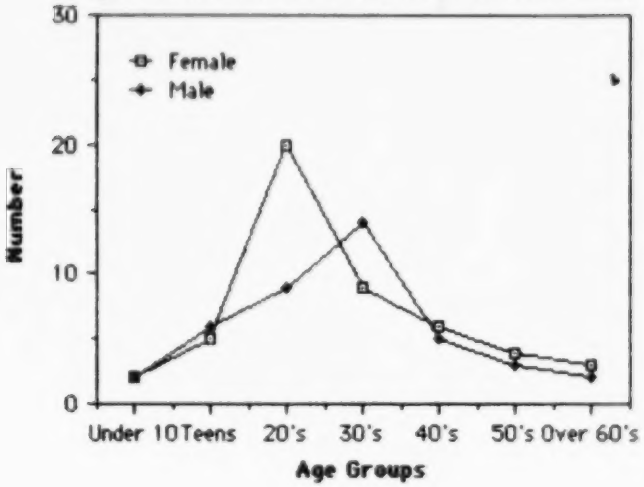
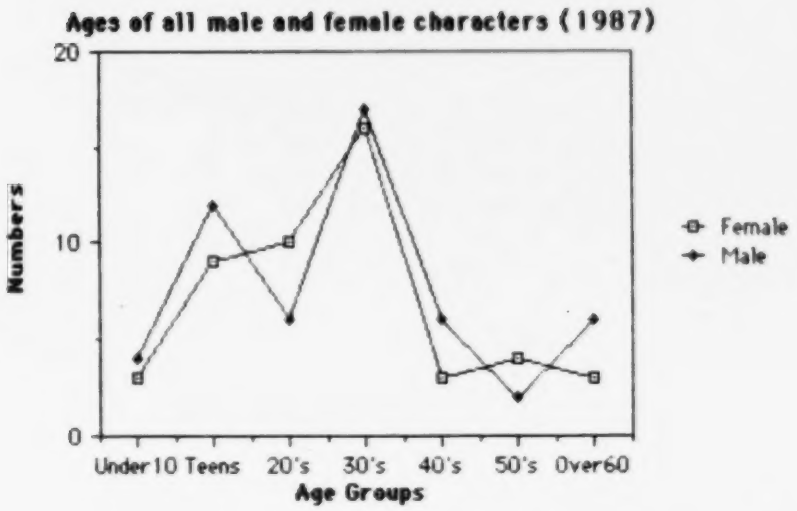


Figure 3b


Ages of all male and female characters (1987)
20
10
0
Numbers
Under10
Teens
20's
30's
40's
50's
Over60
Age Groups
Female
Male

teens. This fact was probably one of the major factors leading to increased numbers of dramas about educational problems.

Table 3

Ages of major and supporting female characters

Year	Major Roles supporting	Teens	20's	30's	40's	50's	Over 60
1977	Major	3%	63	19	13	3	0
	Supporting	11%	33	15	17	15	9
1987	Major	10%	26	43	5	12	5
	Supporting	15%	45	15	11	7	7

Meanwhile, only five to seven percent of all characters in the dramas were elderly characters (over 60 's). The percentage of the elderly found here is lower than the actual percentage of elderly (10.43 %) in the Korean population (Cho-Sun Daily News, Feb 18, 1988). The older male characters were often portrayed as owners of small stores (1977-26%, 1987- 42%); decision-makers on traditional family affairs, such as on marriages of their grandchildren, traditional values and disciplines, etc. (1977-71%, 1987-48%); janitors (1977-23%, 1987-27%); and farmers (1977- 17%, 1987- 21%). None of the older female characters in this study were employed. They were portrayed as advisers of their husbands (1977-87%, 1987-84%); widows who control family affairs (1977-8%, 1987-3%); and victims of incurable disease (1977-7%, 1987-13%). These changes in numbers indicate the following trends: 1) although the elderly often exercised their power on family affairs,

the elderly never played central roles in either 1977 or 1987; 2) they became burdens on their children, and one of the major causes of family disputes; 3) they became, however, financially more independent by owning small businesses (approximately 75 % of Realtors in Seoul are over 60 years old).

As shown in table 3, in 1977, a disproportionate number of female characters, especially in major roles, were in their 20's. In 1987, major female characters tended to be in their 30's. Also in 1987, male characters in both major and supporting roles were generally in their 30's, but the highest percentage of female characters in supporting roles were generally still in their 20's. Thus, while the aging of the baby-boom generation has put the spotlight on characters in their 30's, youth is still emphasized for other female characters.

As shown in table 4, the marked change in the age level of both supporting and major female characters had been accompanied by a shift from unmarried to married status. Since more themes of the current dramas focus on variety of social problems and more major female characters play central roles in story developments, the dramas tend to portray married women with maturity rather than unmarried women with attractiveness. In both 1977 and 1987, however, the supporting female characters were generally unmarried. While the largest percentage of male characters were in their 30's in 1987, those in both major and supporting roles were very

often shown as unmarried. An unmarried man in his 30's with a high salary job is considered the hottest bachelor available in Korea, whereas an unmarried woman in her late 20's or 30's is called "old virgin" or "junk." These uncompromised social norms are obviously reflected in the contents of contemporary dramas.

Table 4

Marital status of characters

year	sex	Roles	Unmarried	Married	Divorced Widowed	Unclear
1977	Female	Major	47%	34	19	0
		Supporting	44%	26	30	0
	Male	Major	45%	41	11	3
		Supporting	57%	21	7	15
1987	Female	Major	31%	50	19	0
		Supporting	54%	15	19	13
	Male	Major	46%	33	14	6
		Supporting	37%	27	12	24

The largest percentage (59%) of jobs for working female characters in the 1977 contemporary dramas were various types of office work and sales positions especially cosmetic sales and insurance sales. In 1987, however, their occupations became more specialized: teacher, nurse, hair designer, artist, professor, TV or news reporter, and fashion designer. Few were engaged in managerial works, although they sometimes owned small shops or restaurants.

The results also provide indications of how much the major characters engaged in various activities in the 1987 contemporary dramas. For example, while 14 percent of the female characters were shown primarily engaged in work, 54 percent were never shown working at all. Few characters were shown engaged primarily in recreational activities or bedroom scenes; in this regard, there was not much difference between the male and female characters. Yet while nearly half of the women were shown doing some work, working scenes were far more frequent for men; work was the primary activity for more than one-fourth of the male characters, compared to 14 percent of the female characters. Furthermore, many women were shown doing at least a little housework, but hardly any men were shown in this activity. In short, the traditional division of labor between the sexes was still portrayed with the emphasis on jobs for men and both jobs and housework for women.

LIFESTYLE TENDENCIES - Table 5 shows several general personalities: active or passive, independent or dependent, and self-centered or self-sacrificing. In 1987, both male and female characters were more often classified as active and independent than in 1977; in fact, female characters were even more active and independent than male characters.

In 1977, a larger percentage of female characters, especially in major roles, were shown as being more concerned about others than themselves. A greater percentage, however, were shown as being most concerned about

Figure4.

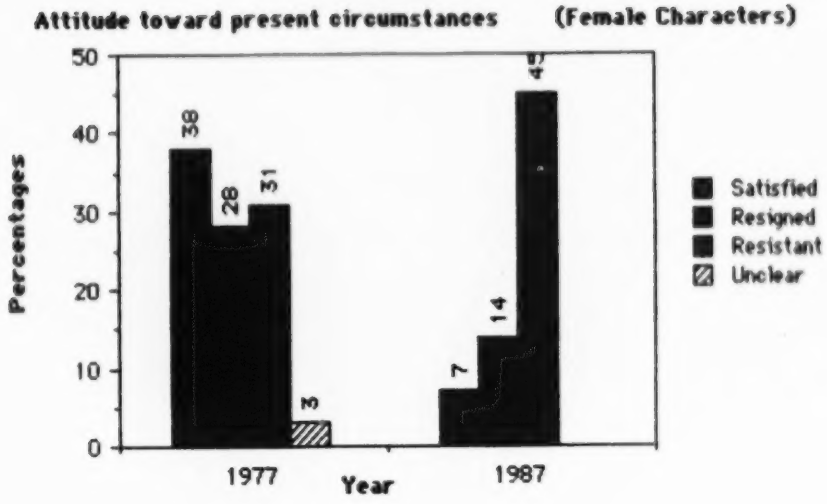

Attitude toward present circumstances (Female Characters)
Percentages
50
40
30
20
10
0
38
28
31
3
7
14
47
1977
Year
1987
Satisfied
Resigned
Resistant
Unclear

Figure 5

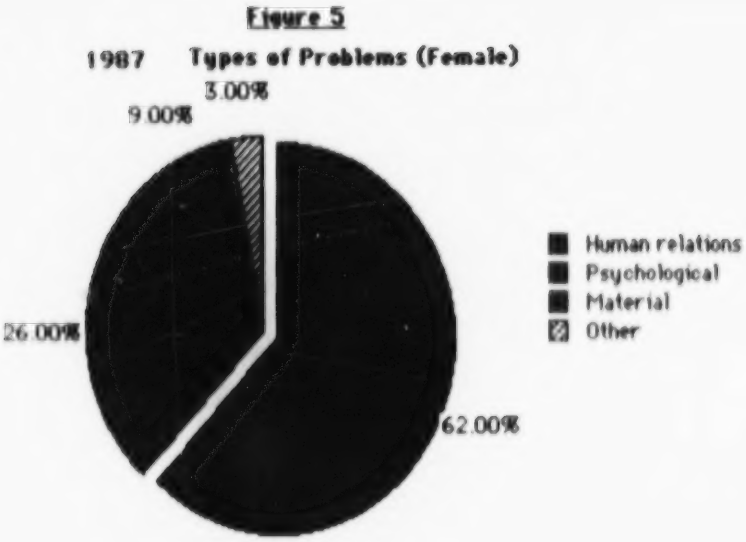
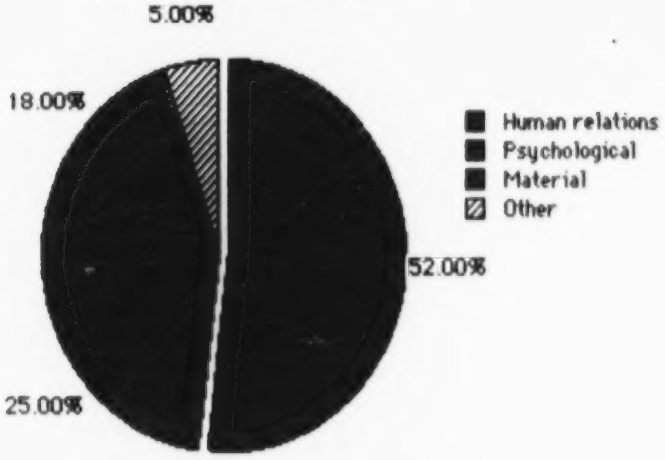

1987 Types of Problems (Female)
3.00%
9.00%
26.00%
62.00%
Human relations
Psychological
Material
Other

Figure 6

Types of Problems (Male)--1987



themselves in 1987 dramas. In other words, there has been a shift toward portraying women who take themselves seriously - and who are willing to do what is necessary to meet their own needs. In short, the 1987 dramas showed a strong tendency to portray women as active and independent. However, there still remained the traditional images of women as being more emotional and family-oriented than men.

Table 5

Images of characters (1987 Dramas)

(Numbers indicate cases of occurrence)

Sex	Female		Male	
roles / Images	Major	Supporting	Major	Supporting
Strong and Modern	33	21	24	32
Warm and Helpful	21	27	37	33
Physically attractive	18	34	24	8
Traditional	21	14	23	12
Sincere and Serious	12	7	32	22
Simple and Honest	8	7	9	4

Figure 4 shows a sharp drop in the percentage of women satisfied with their circumstances. The tendency to be resigned, or let things take their course has also declined. Female characters in 1987 dramas show an increasing tendency to resist their circumstances or to take on challenges. Few male characters in 1987 were satisfied, either; major characters were more likely to take on challenges, while supporting characters were more likely resigned. Major female characters face many problems, and they do not give up easily. But they are more likely to be portrayed as merely resisting, rather than actively taking on challenges. Figure 5-6 show that problems of human relations reached over 60 percent of the total for both male and female in 1987. Female characters were more likely to have problems with their husbands, and next with their children; male characters also were most likely to have troubles with their wives, then with their parents. These trends had not been significantly changed over the period.

Discussion and Conclusion

The most popular drama in Korea now is "Love and Ambition" (airs Thursday 8-9 pm with average rating 75 on MBC). On every Thursday night, the city of Seoul, with a population of ten million, is ready for another saga of adventures in love and hatred. When I visited Seoul in the summer of 1987, I had to watch the drama to avoid being an alien. Traditionally, Korean TV dramas have rarely portrayed glamorous life styles, fantastic lives, and unrealistic situations. This can explain why American prime-time

soap operas and science fictions have failed in Korea, a perfect example of which comes from the rejection of "Dallas" by audiences in Korea. The show was imported by KBS in 1981 but lasted just five months before it was pulled off the air, and it was only popular among female college students. The failure of Dallas is so conspicuous that cultural explanations have to be considered. Possibly the Koreans could not accept the possibility of grown-up brothers fighting each other. Although Korean TV dramas may not resemble the contents of U. S. day-time soaps or Dallas, which often focus on sexual, marital, and glamorous life styles, in the decade from 1977 to 1987, themes of Korean TV dramas widened and deepened in those directions.

TV dramas in 1977, just at the time when Korea's rapid economic growth was slowing down after the first oil crisis, can be said to have shown a nostalgia for the warm community ties that had been largely lost in the process of rapid economic growth. In 1987, however, the public apparently expected even TV dramas to examine sternly such current problems as the loss of community ties and the break-up of the family. Rather than being idealized, characters came to resemble the viewers more closely, and these characters were shown suffering and struggling with their problems. Catering to the majority of their viewers, dramas have focused on the women of the baby-boom generation. The female characters in current dramas show a strong sense of self-regard rather than sacrificing themselves. Yet despite new aspects in the portrayal of the major male and

female characters, many traditional sex role stereotypes still remain, especially in the case of supporting characters.

This paper has shown various kinds of changes in themes and gender images of Korean television dramas over the decade. The larger and more important issues, however, have not been discussed here: 1) though the Korean government prohibits importations of any Japanese cultural products since 1945, Korean intellectual communities painfully admit that modern Korean culture is deeply influenced by the Japanese culture as the result of 35 years of Japanese occupation (1910 through 1945). Korean traditional culture would seem to be well protected from the invasion of Western culture because uniquely westernized Japanese culture is already in the Korean society. Historically, ancient dynasties of Korea were major cultural resources of Japan until it opened the door to the west in the early 13th century. Since then, Japan has established its own unique culture by harmonizing and balancing both the domestic culture and the western culture. Koreans had not had a chance to experience western culture directly until 1945. The old Japanese military occupation and the current economic domination in Korea have blurred the distinction between convenient contemporary Japanese culture and western culture, especially American culture. As a result, Koreans are confused with two non-identical foreign cultures. Thus, the potential for influence by Japanese mass culture on Korean popular culture, individuals, politics should be examined; and though

American programs have failed to penetrate the Korean television market, in the near future, the presence of U. S. military forces and AFKN (American Forces Korean Network) could have major impacts on Korean mass culture, including television dramas. Unless a more sophisticated theoretical model is applied, the question of American or other outside influence remains speculation.

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